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**Sole\_Zine 03 CONVERSION**

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### Article

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Z I N E

TRAINERS  
SNEAKERS  
KICKS+WEBS  
STRIDES+SOLES  
CREPS+BEATERS  
TRABS+TRAINEES

*Whatever you call your footwear, there is a particular tribe who are obsessive about theirs.*

volume 03 / conversion  
winter 2020

We talk to a pioneer of sneaker conversion. In a crowded subculture of trainer collectors, lovers and enthusiasts we meet the man who achieves the unique.





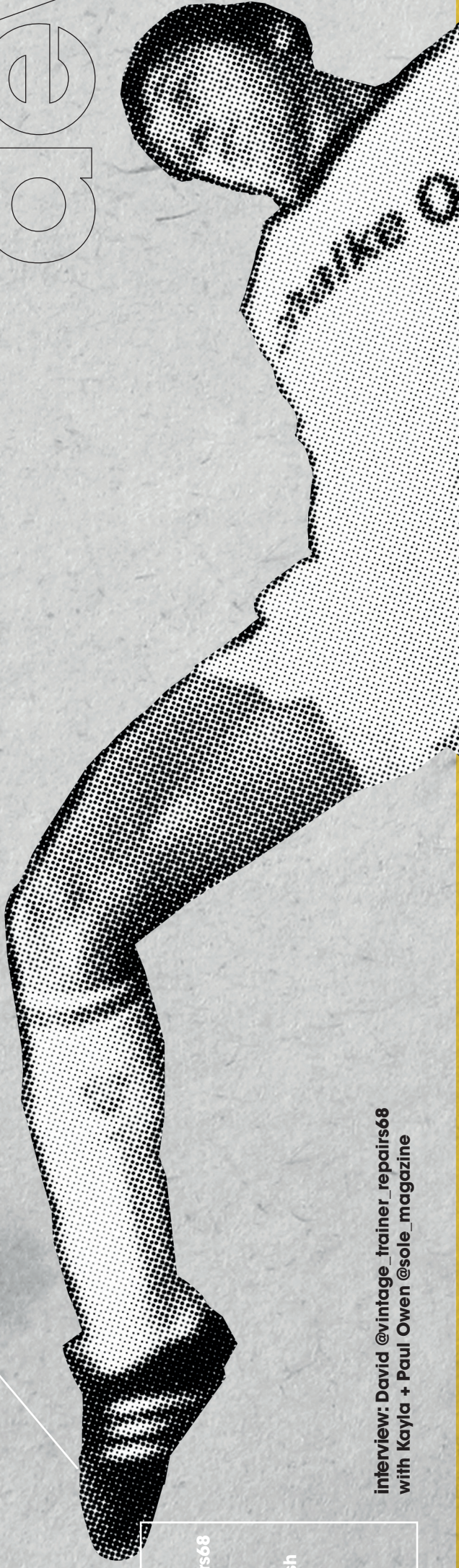


Z I N E

a glimpse into  
the future

future

there is a  
whole new  
subculture  
devoted to  
hybrid  
style



**Instagram:**  
@vintage\_trainer\_repairs68

**Size:**  
8

**First Pair:**  
adidas Barrington Smash

**Latest Pair:**  
adidas Zurro

**Holy Grail:**  
adidas Zeida

interview: David @vintage\_trainer\_repairs68  
with Kayla + Paul Owen @sole\_magazine



adidas KLAUS FISCHER CORDOBA  
football boot conversion





**KO:** Can we start with a bit about you, how you got into the trainer industry, your expertise and what you do.

**DC:** It was something that I'd always done for myself and my friends through being a shoe repairer for all these years, but I'd only ever done just bits and bobs, just basic minor bits of restoration to keep trainers going and things. Years and years ago I worked at a company called Shoe Care, this was when I was only in my early 20's and they were a specialist shoe repair business and they were trying to get into repairing running shoes and hiking boots. So I got a job and was sent away for a week's training in their factory where they did all the running shoe repair work. That week of training at the end of the 80's stuck with me. I saw all the different ways they were doing things, it was really interesting for me to be taking them apart, seeing all the construction and seeing how they were putting new mid-soles on.

Then with the advent of the internet and Facebook, once I started getting onto that and joining the various trainer groups and seeing that people were crying out for these types of jobs to be done, like sole transplants and things like that, then I was like, well I could do that 'cos I'd done similar work before. Around that time I got to know one of the country's biggest collectors purely by coincidence as we both used the same barber. We spoke about what I could do, then I went on to do a few pairs for him from his collection, which he then used as an example to show other collectors what I was capable of. I did have to think about it a little bit because it was like realising I was going to be taking on people's pride and joys, very rare and expensive pairs of trainers, so I had to think well what would be the best way to do it, you can't just steam roller in. But once I'd got it figured out in my mind the best way to do it, putting it into practice and seeing that it could work, as soon as I started putting it out there then the requests for work started piling in.

= *transplants* =

And that then led into transplants, sole swaps, and then someone approached me and asked if I fancied doing a spike conversion. And I was like right, OK, so again I had to think about how I could do that and what would be the best approach.

One of the difficult things about doing them (spike conversion) is that the pitch on a running shoe is a lot different to the pitch on a normal training shoe. You've only got to look at it and you can see the way it kicks right up at the back, it's all about the fore foot because you're running and pushing off from the ball of your foot, so to speak, so the design of the shoe is completely different and it also twists more inwards to the shape of your foot. So that has to be corrected. It has to be twisted back out and then it has to be flattened down a bit more, you've got to bring the pitch right down to give it a more conventional running shoe style. If you see the way the mid-sole does rise towards the back and then thins out towards the front of the shoe, but if you were to just stick a mid-sole into a normal running spike without altering the pitch, it would end up looking like a platform at the back because it would be built up so much. It wouldn't work and I did do a pair like that at the start, as an experiment and they looked like a pair of

bananas 'cos I just didn't get the thing right at all and it was almost like a U-shape, but with trial and error that's how you learn these things. Once I got my head around that it just became a lot easier, and it just kinda went from there.

So that was the start of it, at first I was just doing conventional white mid-sole, black out-sole or gum out-sole or whatever to match, but again the more I started getting into it the more I started seeing different materials that were available.

You can buy different types of out-sole sheeting for various styles of out-sole, different colour mid-sole EVA, different densities. So that was when all the ideas started coming in and I was like right well, you can start getting different coloured EVA sheeting to match the colours that are in the upper you are working with. So obviously you can do the contrasting sheeting that fits more in style with the trainers that were coming out, and you'd see in the shop. And also when you want to get really technical about it, you can start adding the different density into the heel part of the shoe so that it's softer. Which are all the things that adidas do in their own trainers.

So it was just a case of trying to incorporate that myself. But again it was through the shoe repair training that I knew the ways to do that, you know what I mean, it has to be angled and it has to be put on within a wedge, you can't just put two flat edges together, there's all little nuances like that if you don't do it that way it won't work.

**KO:** Interesting, you say that through your training and earlier career you worked on lots of brands, would you now say you are quite a purest and would only work on adidas?

**DC:** No, I would rather work on different shoes, I just don't get sent them. It's just always adidas and people ask me that when they approach me, do I only do adidas, and I say no, I'll do whatever brand. If I can do it, I'll do it. But it's just that people see adidas, adidas, adidas on my (insta) page and I think that's all they think I work on.

= *the brands* =

**PO:** Thinking about the different brands, would you as an expert say that one particular brand has a better build quality?

**DC:** It depends, with the 70's models and 80's models I'd say they were all quite even, but obviously the later models are not really something that I do. I mean with adidas I can, probably up to '89, early 90's with some of the ZX ones, I can still do them, but once you start to bring in the plastic stabilisers and stuff like that, it's not what I do. Once Nike started

bringing in the air bubbles and the air pockets. I get requests for them all the time, but I just won't touch them. I done a pair and the air pockets popped. Once they popped they were like a packet of Pringles, you can't stop, you know what I mean. But that's because I use an industrial press machine and it was too much for them and they just burst, so unfortunately, no I don't touch them. It's only with being asked about other brands, I would do them but they would have to be pre-'85, or a reissue of that type of shoe.

**KO:** Do you have a favourite conversion that you recall?

**DC:** The thing is none of them are ever the same, I mean I've not done as many pairs of spikes as I would like to, I would be quite happy now to just set up and carry on just making spikes (conversions). Ideally I would like to buy the spikes myself and just sell them, that's what I would really like to do because it's nice doing them for other people but once I'm making them for myself and selling them it takes off another side of the pressure, because I'm just making them for me, for my designs, 'cos obviously I've got my own designs that I want to make. One of the things about doing it for people is the client can get creative, I can get creative, discuss how we want it to go, talk about what is possible to use, what about this, what about that. That side of it's great but once the conversations over and the job starts, then the pressures on. They've (the client) got their preconceptions of how they want it to look and you've got to try and match that. Although I've got the machinery and I've got the trainer I've not got everything that a factory has got, so obviously there is a limit, but I also think they (the client) can appreciate that it is hand made. It is just me in the workshop making it for them, so it might not be a full shop finished item, but it's as good as you're gonna get.

= *unique* =

**KO:** Definitely and like you say it will be unique, it will be a 'one off' there is no-other like it and I think that's what you're buying into when you commission someone like yourself.

**DC:** Yeah, and that's the side of it that I try to promote. Everybody wants a pair of trainers that no-bodies got and if you get a spike conversion, then that's what you've got. I won't make the same pair twice. If someone comes to me and says I like that pair that you did for him will you make them for me, I'd say no. I'd say I'll do you something similar but there will have to be something different because I don't make the same pair twice.

**KO:** You are obviously emotionally invested, you're excited by what you do and to talk to somebody who actually says that about their day-to-day job is pretty amazing. I do not speak to many people who say that about what they do every day... *CONTINUED*

# CONVERSION

with  
**@vintage-trainerrepairs68**





**adidas ROCKET**

Reshaped around new inner footboards, foam fillers added to level out, handmade custom midsoles finished with Wellen gum soles.

Made in West Germany.



**adidas APOLLO / blue**

Reshaped around new inner fibre footbeds, handmade EVA midsole with colour contrasting heel supports & finishing / dividing strip, gum Wellen outsoles.

Made in West Germany.



**adidas APOLLO / yellow**

Reshaped around new inner fibre footboards, handmade EVA midsole in full black with black Wellen outsoles.

Made in West Germany.



**Adidas SPEEDER**

Reshaped around new inner fibre footboards. Handmade EVA midsole with red colour contrasting strip. Wellen gum outsoles. Finished with colour contrast toe bumpers.

Made in France.



**adidas INTERVAL 2**

Reshaped around new inner fibre footboards, handmade full white EVA midsole, gum Wellen outsole.

Made in Yugoslavia.



**adidas ADISTAR**

Complete strip down. Reshape new fibre inner footboards. Repositioned tongues, triple layer mid-soles built with contrasting colours with different densities. Heel angled following the stripes. New Vibram sports out-soles to finish.

Made in Yugoslavia.

CONTINUED...

**PO:** You are living and breathing what you love to do.

**KO:** Yes, and there's something to be said for that, for sure.

**DC:** Well yeah, unfortunately it is only a small part of my day-to-day, but if I could do it full time I would be a happy man.

**KO:** How would you define trainer culture and the sub-cultural groups within it?

**DC:** When I first started getting into the Facebook groups I thought I knew a bit. I thought I know trainers, I know my stuff, but once I got into these groups I realised that I know, what I know. There's lads out there who are proper obsessive. As is the case in every sub-culture. But now that I've got into it further and I've realised all the different strands that there is out there, it amazes me, it really does amaze me. I think it's really interesting all the different elements that people are in to.

**KO:** That brings us on nicely to your input to the film Sole Seeking in South America

(2014). Can you tell us more about that?

**DC:** I did the repair work on some of the trainers that came out of the shop (Carlos Ruiz owner of an adidas dead stock store). Obviously the shop has become legendary. The basic story is there was a shop in Argentina that had all this untold old stock that was still sitting in boxes. Gary Aspden, Ian Brown and a gang of other adidas super fans went over and found all these really rare trainers, but they had all disintegrated because of the conditions they'd been stored in.

- silver wind -

Luckily, I was trusted to do quite a few pairs out of there, particularly one model called (adidas) Silver Wind which is one of the main models that they were after and they couldn't believe their luck when they found them. A stack of them! But that was more into the mid-sole build so slightly a different type of work but again that was really,

really interesting because I'd seen the film myself and to get my own hands on trainers that I'd seen in the film and in the shop and to think here's me getting a chance to work on them, it was a privilege. Although they did come with their problems, because especially with the (adidas) Silver Wind - I'd never seen a pair, all I had was photographs to go by and when you see the actual model the heel stabilisers that they've got on them, the way they flare out around the mid-sole. So trying to build the mid-sole so that they fitted in to that flare was really, really difficult and obviously because they were such a rare pair of trainers the pressure was really on to try and get it right. But I think I ended up doing about five or six pairs of the (adidas) Silver Wind, but all in all I think I've done about 15 pairs out of Carlos's shop now.

- the people -

**KO:** The world is a small place now, it doesn't really matter

where you are in the world anymore.

**DC:** Well I get people sending trainers to me from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, America, Russia, so people are prepared to do that.

**PO:** How did the football boot conversion come about?

**DC:** That was really good, I enjoyed that one, 'cos again it was something completely different. The pitch of a football boot is almost completely flat, well football boots from that era (1970's), there was no real shape to it. It was just a flat upper, so trying to work around that to still get the running style shape into it created its own problems to solve. The lad who asked me to do that was very specific on how he wanted it to look. Which is a good thing in a way, because he's come straight at me with an idea, and he sent me photos of how he envisioned it. Then I could work with that and we discussed around the idea with what I could actually do and then when it was done

he was absolutely made up with the results, so I'm happy that he's happy.

**PO:** So you've got the spike conversion and now the football boot conversion, are there others in the pipeline?

**DC:** Not at the moment. There are certain limitations depending on the style of the upper, which determine how successful you may be with it. That would be something I'd have to point out to a client. When you are looking at running spikes to convert, don't get anything where the out-sole comes up onto the upper, because once that's taken away the glue marks are still there and then you've got to try and figure out what you're going to do. That's what you've got to keep in mind with a conversion. It's like these modern football boots now, I wouldn't be able to do something like that, but a boot from the 70's or 80's then yeah I could work around. Nearly all the spikes I get are suede uppers, the one leather pair

(featured in this issue) the (adidas) Rocket, I really like them. I thought they came out really well and I'd like to be doing more leather style one's 'cos I think they're a bit more robust so they can take a bit more stick during the process.

**KO:** So finally, give us a glimpse into the future of trainer conversion?

**DC:** The possibilities are endless if you've got the time and the skill set to do it. As well as designing and making my own trainers to sell, I'd also like to take different trainers, and take things off and build a totally new trainer, a hybrid trainer. I've done a bit of that in the past and sometimes they can go drastically wrong and they just look stupid, but if they go right, they really work. I'm looking at getting into that sort of thing as well.

**KO:** Thank you so much for your time David.

**DC:** No problem, I enjoyed that, thank you. Speak soon.

